

An Essay
on
Poisoned Wounds.

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Poisoned Wounds—

Poisoned ~~xxx~~ wounds, are such, as are inflicted by the injection of a poison into the system, through the medium of wound, puncture or bite. The following varieties are the most commonly met with. The stings of bees & insects, the sting or bite of poisonous serpents and reptiles, the bite of rabid animals, and dissection wounds.

The Stings of bees, are the most common and best illustrative variety of this class of wound; they may be very trivial in their character, but then again they have been known to produce ^{death}, by inducing a severe inflammation, or erysipelas, by the multiplicity of their stings, where a swarm of them have attacked a person and stung him in a great many places; again by the injury being inflicted in some very sensitive organ, as the eye, or has happened in a few cases, in the mouth or fauces, in consequence of

having swallowed a bee, by eating the honey-comb;
but in the great majority of cases no unpleasant or
dangerous symptoms are apt to occur, and apart
from the annoyance they give rise to need little or
no medical treatment. If the bite has been severe
touching the part with a strong solution of ammonia
will in nearly all cases take the pain and swelling
away almost immediately.

There are some varieties of this
species of poisoning, which are much more dan-
gerous, and happily more rare than the stings of
bees or insects of that description; the tarantula, Scorpion
centipede &c, are met with in some latitudes, whose stings
are much dreaded by the natives, as they in all cases
give rise to either troublesome or dangerous symptoms
and have been known to produce ^{fatal results.} the bite of the
tarantula is said to create a disease, which is much
powerfully affected by music, and from this cir-
cumstance a disease known as Tarantism being

being one almost analogous in its character to the
 symptoms produced by this insect, has as already
 seen, ^{been} ~~made~~ honored with the name of this disgusting
 creature: the existence of this disease has been denied
 by a great number of eminent men, and the symptoms
 ascribed to the sting of this spider also; A French naval
 surgeon, whose name I do not call to mind, believing
 it to be nothing more than a popular superstition,
 visited in Naples one of those women, who make a
 livelihood by permitting themselves to be stung, ^{by} ~~with~~
 a tarantula, and then exhibiting their grace in dancing
 to music, while under the effects of the poison; and by
 much persuasion induced her to allow him to apply
 the viscer to her arm; he did so! and after the lapse
 of a few minutes, the music struck up a solemn
 air, which certainly affected the woman wonderfully;
 she wept, groaned, and made the piteous lamentation;
 when suddenly the music changed to a lively dancing
 tune, ~~and~~ when she started up and after looking

around the room in a bewildered manner, commenced
 dancing in a most violent, and laborious ^{style}, ~~style~~,
 so that the perspiration streamed from her, until her
 garments were quite wet; suddenly in the middle of
 one of her wild figures, she threw up her hands, and
 fell to the floor, to all appearance, in a severe fainting
 fit, but on the Doctor offering to raise ^{her}, they were told
 that she would come too of herself after a few minutes
 which she certainly did, ready for another performance.
 After paying the exorbitant fee, she was to her great
 indignation informed, that she had not been bitten
 at all, but that she had sustained a very severe
 pinch, by the finger and thumb of the doctor. The
 scorpion and centipede are also capable of inflicting
 a very dangerous sting, and their sting is more to
 be dreaded as it is commonly inflicted without any
 admonition, and without the insect being seen, as
 when is found among woods, and wood piles, it is
 of the same colour as the wood, and in other situations

its colour changes according to circumstances, they rarely sting unless angered, or suddenly alarmed with no chance for escape; one thing is very remarkable in connection with them, and that is, that tobacco or the presence of tobacco, renders them so enraged, that they will bite and sting at anything in their reach indiscriminately, this I have witnessed in several occasions, in the West Indies and South America.

Of all the varieties of poisoned wounds, those inflicted by venomous serpents, are the most to be dreaded; added to the uncontrollable disquiet and dread occasioned by even the sight of a serpent, are the dreadful agonies, which supervene their deathful, and commonly fatal sting. It is a well known fact, that only such of the serpent tribe are venomous, who possess the celebrated fang, but still as a tribe they are to be dreaded, for in those who are fortunately deprived of this fang, we find a most terrible constrictive power, which is

equally as dangerous in some case as the poison, for
 the example, there is the bad constrictor, who can
 with ease, crush the bones as if they were of glass, in
 the largest ox; the common black snake of our coun-
 try, sometimes attains a formidable size, and is
 quite dangerous adversary. Next to the Cobra di Capella
 of India, the rattlesnake is perhaps the most
 deadly of all the serpent tribe, a rattlesnake bite has
 proved fatal in nine hours, and one by the cobra in
 less than an hour.

The bite of Rabid Animals, is also one
 of the most terrible in its results, and one that is most
 common of the dangerous variety of this class of wounds.
 Several prophylactics have been recommended, but I
 must coincide with Prof Semple, who says the
 only sure one is decapitation of all the dogs. After
 an individual has been bitten by a rabid animal
 there a great variety of symptoms present themselves
 of the most appalling nature, and one in which

great stress is laid by all writers, is the difficulty experienced in deglutition, particularly when fluids are attempted to be introduced. In very carefully perusing Watson's practice and other works on this subject, I can find no mention of a case being cured, when the well marked symptoms of Hydrophobia have become developed, indeed Watson, and all the other writers, seem to have made no attempt, to treat a patient suffering with this malady medically, but according to Enchsen, "recollecting that you have" "an exhausting disease to deal with, you must" "support the patient, with good nourishing food" "if he can take it, and if not with stimulants" "and beef essence." apart from this their attention seems to have been wholly directed to forcing into the patient fluids, when - as Watson says - "even" "the noise occasioned by the pouring of them from" "one vessel to another, are sufficient to throw"

74
"the patient, into the most violent convulsions."

Hydrophobia is sometimes met with during the course of some other disease, and is then called "sympathetic Hydrophobia," and is quite amenable to treatment.

Persons who have been bitten by a mad dog, have sometimes escaped without one single bad symptom, because the teeth in passing the clothing are apt to have the virus wiped off and so none is conveyed to the wound; they have also died from the effects of having a dog in this state lick their hand, when there was an abrasion of the skin, or a cut, which would materially aid the absorption of the virus.

There is a very slight chance for the virus of the rattlesnake, being prevented from entering the wound in a similar manner, by reason of their peculiarly formed fangs. The fangs of the snake are hollow tubes, with a minute opening in the point; they also

also are in apposition at their root, with a small sack or pouch which secretes the poison matter, there is an opening in this sack, corresponding to the commencement of the canal in tooth, so, that when the fang is struck into a body, the pressure that is communicated by the shock to the pouch, forces a drop of poison to pass into the canal, and by it is transmitted to ^{the} further opening, and injected into the wound; so that unless a plug of clothing stops up as it were the passage, the poison must almost inevitably pass into the puncture.

Dissecting wounds, are a very common species of wound among students, and medical men, and are seldom of much importance; Ericson, "says" that certainly the introduction of putrescent "matter into the system, may be justly considered" "a serious matter, but ~~it~~ it is mostly in part = " "materia, examinations, that the more severe cases" "have been met with before putrefaction has taken."

"place;" every student frequently, punctures or cuts himself while dissecting, and yet no unpleasant results, often follow, though there are cases on record, of death having been occasioned by them and many cases, in which serious illness has resulted.

The best treatment in all cases of poisoned wounds, is suction, which can do no injury, unless the lips should be cracked or in other ways present a raw surface, for the absorption of the virus; in the event of this failing, or if there should be circumstances forbidding it, the actual cautery is the next best, acting on the toxicological law, that "heat kills animal poisons"; taking a red hot iron, and thoroughly burning out the part is a terrible procedure, but one which is fully justified by the emergency of the case.

There have been a great many popular remedies and antidotes, for the cure

of poisoning, and none of them seem to stand the test of practice, though all have the appearance of truth, in theory; the one which in some parts of the country, has received the largest share of patronage is whiskey or brandy, for snake bites, it being affirmed that if the person bitten can be so far put under the effects of either of the above, as to render him intoxicated, the poison is neutralized and the individual safe, but in my humble opinion the whiskey would be as dangerous to the patient, as the poison, or the remedy as bad as the disease; for if the man has got to die, why not die like a gentleman, by the poison, than like a dog, by inflammation of the brain or mania potus, brought on, as is recorded, in one case by a man's drinking three quarts of whiskey, before he felt the effects of the liquor sufficiently to be removed from danger of death by snake poisoning - Another method is to excise portions of the integument and vessels

down to the ~~bone~~, for some distance around the wound; how are we to know to ~~know~~ how much to excise, without first knowing how rapidly the virus is circulated; and if it is in the neighborhood of large and important blood vessels, these would have to be ligated, and the patient probably be as much exposed to death, from the operation, as from the operation of the poison —

In the treatment of all poisoned wounds, why are not our homoeopathic remedies as applicable as in other diseases, for instance in the treatment of rattlesnake bites, we have for our guide the pathogenesis of *Crotalus* Her. and to guide us in the selection of our remedy. I do not understand our law of similia to compel us to use *Crotalus* as the remedial agent, in a case of this kind, for to my understanding, we are not to use the same drug that made the disease, for the cure

of it, but to use one which has a ~~the~~ greatest similarity of action, and in this case we have a number to choose from, Belladonna, atrop, Tropa Terra, Thuidium, Merc Sol, Iachsis Trigonecephalus, Hyoscyamus Niger, Rhus Toxic, Conium Maculatum, Arsenic &c; but I do not wish to be understood as advocating their use, ~~or~~ in infinitesimal doses, as in the treatment of ordinary diseases, but use them in quantities large enough to suit the occasion which we can do, without departing from our great therapeutic law "similia similibus curantur," for in whatever quantities our remedies are used, either in massive doses or in the attenuated manner, they are still homoeopathic, if used homoeopathically to the disease.

In the treatment of dissection wounds a drop of Nitric Acid \mathfrak{ss} , dropped into the wound,

will in most cases remove the danger of any unpleasant sequelae, but in aggravated cases there are no doubt a number of remedies in our Materia Medica, that would be found appropriate to the disease. It is rarely that a wound of this description, results in anything more than a slight swelling or inflammation of the part injured, but three cases recorded which have been very serious, & in their results, if a person of scrupulous habit, should be so injured, he would be likely from the state of his general constitution, to be either seriously ill, or have his health permanently affected, or even lose his life.

The symptoms commonly ascribed to wounds of this nature, are first a swelling and inflammation of the part, disorganised languor, &c. swelling and suppuration of the glands of the axilla, or groin, or parotid

glands, delirium, and sometimes death. A wound received while examining a body, that has met its death by erysipelas, phlebitis, proctitis, whether from proctitis or the operation for hernia is invariably unpleasant in its results, and when inflicted by a speculum of bone, or by the tooth of a saw, is more than ordinarily dangerous, and troublesome in its treatment to say the least.

Before closing this subject I wish to say a few more words on the subject of snake bites; as I have lately read some very good remarks in the North American Medical Surgical Review, by S. Peir Mitchell M.D. lecturer on physiology, on this subject, from investigations that he made on this variety of wounds. In describing the venom, he says "The venom of the rattlesnake is a yellow albuminous fluid, of an acid reaction, of a specific,

gravity, of 1.044, and coagulable at ~~a~~ tempera-
-ture of 140° to 160° F. Its toxic activity is
slightly ~~un~~affected by boiling, and ~~not~~ at all
by freezing. Acids, and alkalis, alcohol
&c, do not destroy its virulence, and when
dried it retains its crested power for an
unlimited period of time. On analysis it
discovers at least two albuminous sub-
-stances; one coagulable by boiling, either
alone, or diluted by water, and the other
only by alcohol, and constituting the
active principal of the virus, and is so
called crotonine."—It may be as well
to state here, that these remarks of his
are all entirely original with himself,
they being all founded on actual exper-
-iment, with the living serpent, as well
as by inoculation of the virus.—It also

appears, that the sting of the snake is not so infallibly fatal, as popular belief, makes it appear to be, inasmuch as there are several accidents or circumstances, that may occur which will render the sting harmless, or at least produce no dangerous symptoms.

Fontana, one of the first physicians who investigated this matter admits, that the fang of the serpent is provided with a canal, but says the canal of the tooth does not communicate with the duct at all, but that the virus is transmitted by a groove running along the side of the tooth; and that the virus is not expelled from the sack, by the shock of the sting but by the voluntary contraction of the temporal muscles. Dr Mitchell agrees with him in part

as he acknowledges the action of the temporal muscle, but opposes the manner of the passage of the virus: he also says, if the fang is not perfectly erected at the time of striking, the duct does not communicate properly with the canal, and so the virus is forced out alongside of the fang, and being thus mixed with saliva, is so much diluted, that even if it enters the wound it is almost innocuous; and also that there is a strong probability of its swelling in the skin at some distance from the puncture, and being in that situation perfectly harmless.

The treatment, he divides into local, and constitutional. The local is also divided into suction, and ligature, suction when the ligature cannot be ap-

=plied, and both if convenient, when the ligature
is admissible.

The ligature should consist of
a broad band, put round the limb, as
near to the wound as possible, and kept
there, until it became almost unbearable
from the pain, then to be loosened slightly,
keeping the finger on the pulse, and the
moment the pulse becomes slower, or more
feeble, tighten the band, this to be repeated
at the discretion of the physician until
he thinks the venom is all expelled; by
this procedure, a small amount of the
poison is admitted at a time, and thus
preparing the system for throwing off
or effectually combating its action.

The constitutional treatment
consists in administering stimulants in

suffering quantities, to produce excitement
but not complete intoxication, as this is
not desirable, in account of the prostration
that occurs. He also administers the
following prescription as an antidote
called Bibron's Antidote, named after the
celebrated naturalist, Prof Paul Bibron,
Prince of Wurtemberg.

R Potassii, iodid grs iv
Hydr. chl. comis, " ij.
Bromini. 3 v.

S. Ten drops of this mixture diluted
with a table spoonful or two of
brandy, constitute a dose, to be
repeated if necessary -

On account of the paralyzed state of the
muscles of the pharynx, this mixture must
be exhibited before the second stage sets in,

or otherwise there will be inability to swallow it, and of course it can do no good.

Dr Mitchell in summing up says, "alcohol is to be looked upon as a merely counter-active agent; in a word, as a stimulus to be employed to bring the patient, over the prostration caused by remond poisoning. More than this it certainly is not, and those who have looked upon it as a direct chemical antidote, and as available for local treatment, need but be told to settle the matter, that a mixture of alcohol and remond is not less poisonous than unmixed remond."

Respectfully
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